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Civility and Its Significance

On the hot dusty plains of Kansas, a farmer works his field. A stranger's car passes on the dirt road nearby. The farmer waves. He does not know who is in the car, but still he waves. He is not surprised if the stranger waves back; he expects it. It is a scene that plays out **endlessly** in the rural Midwest.

Wheat stands ripe in the Kansas fields. The combines are rolling. Word comes that a neighbor has been injured and is unable to harvest his crops. With little discussion or debate, surrounding farmers pull their combines out of their own fields, swing into his fields and harvest his crop. Some of the farmers are personal friends; some simply live nearby; others are mere acquaintances. They put their own harvests at risk to harvest their neighbor's fields, but they finish his harvest and, with little fanfare, they return to their own fields. This occurrence is **not** uncommon.

These practices may puzzle the rider of an urban subway, where passengers are more likely to avert their gaze than acknowledge one another. If the farmer were asked why he waved

to complete strangers, he would likely respond, "Just being neighborly." If the farmers were asked why they would help out someone who is not a close friend and risk the loss of their own crops, most would say:

> He needed help. It is the neighborly thing to do. I know others would do the same for me if I were in that situation.

Contrast that behavior with the highly publicized case of Doletha Ward of Detroit this past summer.[2] After men in a car she had bumped in a minor accident rammed her car on a crowded bridge, smashed it with a crow bar, pulled her from the car and beat her, she jumped to her death from the bridge. The crowd did not intervene to save her.

I want to reflect on the Kansas farmers and to lift out some of the features in their neighborliness. To begin with, there is exhibited here a feeling of good-will to others, even strangers (as the farmer's wave indicates). Second, there is a willingness to act on that feeling. The farmers are able to recognize their

injured neighbor's interests and act for his interests without regard to their own. There is an element of altruism here, although there may be self interested concerns as well. Third, the feeling of goodwill is mutual and recognized to be mutual. There is a sense that "we are all in this together." Fourth, there is a presumption of trust toward others, even strangers. (Contrast the farmer's wave with the subway rider's averted gaze.) Finally, there is a presumption of reciprocity--"I know others would do the same for me."

Notice, that this behavior is not based on or motivated by close friendship. Participants may be mere acquaintances or even strangers. Also notice that the farmers helping their injured neighbor is not an isolated incident. It is a practice. This is not the first or the last time the farmers will do such things. It is an incident born of customary behavior. The farmers know what to do, and they and do it without much deliberation. The same is true of the farmer's wave. It is this feature of being a practice that allows a certain element of trust to emerge, based on the belief that a gesture of goodwill

will eventually be reciprocated, and this trust allows a certain element of altruism.

Probably we would all prefer to be on the receiving end of the farmers' neighborliness rather than the other behaviors described. Or even better, to **live** in a such a society. There is a sense here of *harmonious* life between neighbors.

Contrast that sense of a harmonious society of Kansas farmers with the description of the uncivil atmosphere described by a cousin of Boris Pasternak in the Soviet Union of the 1950s.

> Wherever you looked, in all our institutions, in all our homes, *skloka*, was brewing. *Skloka* is a phenomenon born of our social order....It stands for base, trivial hostility, unconscionable spite, the vicious pitting of one clique against another. It thrives on...spying, scheming, slander, the igniting of base passions...[Which] allow one individual or group rabidly to hate another individual or group.

> *Skloka* is natural for people who have been incited to attack one another.[3]

What the farmer calls "neighborliness," others have called civility. Civility expresses the relationships that citizens in a society ought to have toward one another. Neighborliness is close to a relationship that Aristotle calls civic friendship. I will not have time to explicate Aristotle's notion but I will use the terms "neighborliness", "civic friendship", and "civility" interchangeably.

For Aristotle, this neighborliness or, if you will, civic friendship, is a powerful glue that holds civil society together:

> Community depends on friendship; and where there is enmity instead of friendship, men will not even share the same path.[4]

If we use neighborliness as our model of civility then civility can be thought of as an attitude of goodwill and a disposition to act on it

that each citizen extends to all other citizens. 1) At a minimum, it means that we **avoid incivility** to others, we obey the law, we don't gratuitously harm others. 2)When a conflict arises, we will be inclined to give each other the benefit of the doubt. 3)We may even go out of our way to help one another. The attitude allows for collaborative projects for the common good. Whatever the degree of goodwill, it is clear that a society marked by a spirit of mutuality is far removed from a society dominated by *skloka*, or a spirit of mutual suspicion and hostility.

Civility is striking in that it is impersonal--it does not distinguish among citizens. Suppose that you are stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire, and a stranger stops to help you change it. The stranger does not stop because of who you are--your **personal** identity is irrelevant. The stranger may expect that someday, someone will repay his kindness --but he does not expect that you will be the one to do it.

It is because of this feature of impersonal goodwill, that a society infused with civility generates an ongoing sense of goodwill. For example, many of us can attend a school built by

preceding members of our society who did not know us and perhaps did not even have children who would attend the school! We benefit from their impersonal goodwill, and in response we do and should have a sense of goodwill for other citizens. We expect the benefits of our social framework to be ongoing, and we confer similar benefits on other citizens for their sake. In this way, acts of civic friendship build up a reservoir of goodwill -- a reservoir from which all citizens can draw.

A society marked by goodwill also differs from a society that is more narrowly concerned with justice in the sense of defending one's rights. When too many people are obsessed with guarding their rights and liberties, one can lose that sense of neighborliness. By contrast, an atmosphere of civic friendship is not so dominated by a strict accounting of benefits and burdens. The injured farmer does not demand help from others as his moral right; that would be a breach of neighborliness. The farmers who help him don't stop to analyze whether they're morally compelled to fulfill some right the neighbor has. They also don't calculate whether he is likely to reimburse them for their trouble. A

society infused with civic friendship may indeed achieve a good measure of justice -- but a merely just society is not necessarily a harmonious one!

Wellsprings of civility

I want to note that this view of civility does assume a certain view of human nature. It is a view not of saints, but a nature that is within our reach. I assume humans have two important capacities. First, is a capacity for empathy--humans are so built that they have a capacity to identify with the feelings and interests of others. This capacity is not by itself a motivational force and does not by itself move people to action, but it does enable us to become aware of the interests of others. We also have a capacity for benevolence. We are sometimes moved to act disinterestedly for the sake of others when we are made aware of their needs through our capacity for empathy. Benevolence is not our only motive, of course --we also can have self-interested motives for action-- but self-interest is not the sole motive for human action.[5]

Three Responses to Incivility

If we can assume that improving the level of civility in this society is a good thing, then I want to consider three areas for improvement of civility in America. These areas are: renewing efforts to develop and inculcate self-control in our citizens; demanding higher levels of civility and mutual respect in our public discourse; and reinvigorating participation in our civic associations.

Leashing the Passions

Self-control has to do with leashing the passions. As the young men in the Detroit case illustrate, one key to increasing civility may well be a renewed emphasis on self-control. Well-wishing for other people is frequently best expressed by not harming them. Much of our civil behavior does not involve benevolent acts of assistance; it simply requires self-restraint and self-control in not harming others. Self-restraint, although motivated by benevolence, assumes that one has the character strength for self-control. But humans do not come with self-control built in -- nor can we take its development for granted. As Aristotle argued long ago, acquiring self-control involves

developing in youth habits based on repeated good behavior:

> [M]oral virtue comes about as a result of habit... we are made perfect by habit....By doing the acts in our transactions with others we become just or unjust...brave or cowardly....The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger....It makes no small difference then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather, it makes *all* the difference.[6]

Empirical research on the links between youth, self-control and crime supports Aristotle's assertion of the significance of early training. Those most lacking self-control are the ones most likely to become involved in crime. And young people are most lacking in self-control. To illustrate, I summarize five findings in the research literature. a) There is a very strong link

between youth and crime. Individual crime rates decline precipitously with the age of the person, (beginning when persons reach their early twenties).[7] b)There seems to be a close correlation between youths who have little self-control as children and those who become criminals.[8] c)The presence of empathy can moderate impulsiveness and lack of self-control. (For example, one study found that the youngsters most likely to become criminals are those who combine a lack of empathy with aggressiveness and a lack of self-control.)[9] d)Although some lack of self-control may be genetically predisposed, acquiring self-control for most people is a result of training and maturation. e) The fraction of youth involved in crime seems to be fairly steady over time and culture. Much of the recent increase in U.S. crime rates can be traced to the fact that the same small percentage of our youth are committing an increasing number of crimes.[10]

The role of etiquette in self-control

If civility is to be promoted, it seems rather clear that we must encourage self-control in both

children and adults. But how can that be done? One option is to "get tough on crime," to pass more laws and throw even more people in prison.

But there is a different alternative. Edmund Burke, the eighteenth century British statesman,(in reflecting on the incivility and viciousness of the French Revolution) argued that manners are at the foundation of a civilized, lawful society:

> Manners are of more importance than laws. Upon these in great measure, law depends. The law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex and soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe.[11]

Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process: A History of Manners,* his classic study of European manners from the 15th through the 19th centuries, provides support for Burke's

observation.[12] He graphically documents a tremendous shift in behavior in Europe over the past 300 years, which, he argues, is directly attributable to habituation of conduct.

If we were to be suddenly transported back into the late medieval period, we would be astonished by behavior that was extremely crudeby today's standards, but more importantly we would be presented with emotions that were totally unrestrained. We would find people expressing extremes of emotion--laughter, crying and violent rage that we would not even permit in children today.

Elias argued that one of the most dramatic changes in modern European culture was an increased standard of emotional control. By the eighteenth century, in European and American culture, one could see a decisive shift in what was thought to constitute appropriate behavior, and most importantly, an increased emphasis on emotional control, which extended into nineteenth century American culture.

In his recent book, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth Century Urban America*, social historian John Kasson argues that nineteenth century America was the scene of a

grand experiment to use etiquette to inculcate emotional control. American presses in the 1830s churned out twenty-eight different etiquette books; by the 1850s, there were thirty-eight more. By the 1870s, these manuals flooded the social landscape, and they were a major literary genre.[13] Children's etiquette especially emphasized the importance of cultivating habits that led to proper emotional display and self-control. One such manual described its objective as the conquest of savagery:

> In our new ideal American civilization we are not going to veneer the savage, or gild him or hide him, we are going to exterminate him.[14]

Kasson notes that the etiquette manuals sought especially to restrain anger, whether from men or women:

> Of all emotions, anger betrayed a loss of self-possession and irreparably shattered the spirit of

> civility. To abandon oneself to a fit of temper, however righteous, was strenuously to be avoided by both men and women.[15]

An extreme example of this desire to control anger is seen in one bit of advice to the contestants in a duel:

> You meet your adversary, you fight, you kill or are killed; all without one word or act, which is not characterized by the most gentlemanly politeness.[16]

Etiquette manuals urged everyone to avoid arguments. Readers also were instructed not to directly contradict others, because that might generate angry passions:

> If a gentlemen advances an opinion which is different from ideas you are known to entertain, either appear not to have heard it or differ from him as gently as possible. You will not say, "Sir, you are mistaken!" or "Sir, you

> are wrong!" or that you happen to know better; but you will rather use some such phrase as, "Pardon me--if I am mistaken."[17]

The standards of decorum were developed especially to tame the outbursts of emotion from men. The code of the gentleman thus emerged in English-speaking countries during the nineteenth century to create a new standard of civilized behavior among men.[18]

Why this nineteenth century preoccupation with self-control? James Q. Wilson argues that it was in part a response to the forces of urbanization, industrialization, immigration and affluence.

> [The] animating source of self-control was religion and the voluntary associations...but habituation in family, the schools, the neighborhood, and the workplace produced it.[19]

Wilson argues that this "grand experiment" to form character based on etiquette produced

some impressive results. If one were to chart the rate of serious crime in the United States and Europe one would see it begins to increase early in the nineteenth century. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, it levels off and begins to decline well into the twentieth century. About the middle of this century, crime begins to increase again.[20]

Wilson argues that the pattern cannot be accounted for by industrialization, immigration, poverty, urbanization or even demographic trends in the youthful population. It can only be explained by the increased emphasis on inculcation of self-control through etiquette.

> The code was the most successful extralegal mechanism ever invented for adapting male behavior to the requirements of modern life.[21]

But the grand experiment was not to last. By the beginning of the twentieth century, social values began to shift from self-control to self-expression. The twentieth-century trend toward self-expression is clearly seen in the results of a study conducted in Muncie, Indiana, to

determine the traits that parents desire in children. The original study was conducted in the 1920s, and it was replicated in 1978.

Among the results: The trait of strict obedience was a quality of highest importance to parents. In 1924, 45% ranked it as one of the three most desirable traits. That ranking dropped to 17% in 1978 into the category of secondary importance. In 1978, the most important traits desired by parents in their children were independence and tolerance. Independence rose from being chosen by 25% in 1924 to 76% in 1978, and tolerance increased from 6% to 47%.[22]

The reasons for this shift of values have been widely and intensely debated -- but whatever the causes, there's no doubt that over that 50 -year period, parents became much less concerned about inculcating a sense of self-control in their children and more concerned with self-expression and independence.

To renew civility in this society, it may well be time to give renewed attention to the inculcation of self-control--perhaps through a renewed emphasis on decorum.

Civility in Public Life

As a second contribution to American civility, we should demand of ourselves an increased level of civility in public discourse. Incivility in public life corrodes the mutual respect of citizens and their ability to communicate, both of which are especially important for reaching political consensus or compromise on fundamental disagreements in a pluralistic society.

In recent years, incivility has become a form of public entertainment. On television, political talk shows routinely degenerate into shouting matches, where no one can be heard; day-time talk shows encourage people to publicize their private quarrels for our amusement. Some radio talk-show hosts feel free to joke about the murder of an entertainer, or to encourage violent behavior toward public officials. Sporting events feature trash-talking and fights. We have seen the emergence of political attack ads, with their intent to demonize the opponent.

The assumption behind all these activities appears to be that conflict and drama in the form of uncivil behavior excite the passions, create interest, and hence raise ratings in television, radio and politics.

Religious and political concerns stir our deepest passions. For that reason it is all the more significantthe fact that political and religious leaders increasingly model incivility. We hear white religious leaders with significant followings denigrate racial minorities; religious and educational leaders of minorities vilify other minorities. Politicians belittle minorities by publicly mimicking their speech patterns or use slurs to refer to them. Their actions model incivility and give permission to their followers to do the same.

It has long been recognized that political speech unleashes especially powerful passions, and that's why certain courtly and respectful customs have been traditionally maintained in the U.S. House and Senate--for example, prefacing remarks to fellow members of Congress by such terms as "distinguished colleague." These courtesies have enabled persons with passionate and opposing political beliefs to work together. But that customary civility is eroding. One member of the U.S. House of Representatives gazed at the floor of the House in 1995 and commented on the politics of recrimination:

> One of the geniuses of the American system is that you don't demonize your opponents. I feel a lot of hatred out here.[23]

One long-term senator said:

> [The Senate is a] less civil, less thoughtful place, meaner.[24]

Attack ads to influence legislation have had a similar effect. Some have succeeded in defeating certain legislation, but they also have poisoned and polarized the atmosphere so that compromises become much more difficult.

What are the roots of this incivility in public discourse? I want to suggest at least three roots. One source of incivility seems to be the belief that "My incivility is justified, simply because I am acting on behalf of a moral cause." For example, William Bennett recently suggested on a C-Span televised conference that "Incivility in defense of virtue is no vice." Incivility in our public discourse often results from strongly held convictions about the morality of certain public policies such as abortion, gun control, or unwed

teen pregnancies. Some people appear to think that uncivil behavior is justified simply because they are so powerfully motivated by their moral convictions.

> "This is more important" an activist will declare when called upon to defend cursing passersby for wearing fur or leather coats, or scolding coffee-drinkers for using Styrofoam cups. The moral worth of his cause on behalf of animals or the environment is seen as overriding the etiquette injunction against humiliating people.[25]

Of course, such incivility on behalf of a moral cause is not the special province of the political left or political right. Leftists referred to law enforcement officials as "pigs" in the 1960s; rightists have called them "jack-booted thugs" in the 1990s. Whether or not there is merit in someone's complaint about police procedures, such inflammatory language degrades our

respect for law enforcement officials and for the law itself.

People who use uncivil tactics seem to think, in the phrase of Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, two contemporary political theorists, "morally respectable positions can be defended in morally disrespectful ways."[26]

At a deeper level, incivility may be rooted in moral dogmatism, which is the inability or unwillingness to see the moral force behind another point of view. Gutmann and Thompson comment:

> [M]oral dogmatism and its accompanying anger and arrogance...is common among those who treat moral disagreement as a sure sign of the ignorance or depravity of their opponents. (Either you are for killing babies or you are against killing babies, declared Nellie Gray, leader of the March for Life on Washington. Either you're for the liberation of women or you are against it is the

> analogous dogmatism of some pro-choice advocates.)[27]

The incivility here partly results because dogmatists have a mistaken view of the nature of truth on issues of public policy and how one gets at that truth. Dogmatists assume that they all the truth on their side and do not need to hear other perspectives. As Thompson and Gutmann suggest, such a position often leads to the attitude that if I have the truth and you do not see it, then you must be either willfully ignorant or depraved.

But, as the English philosopher John Stuart Mill reminds us in his essay, *On Liberty,* humans frequently split the truth between them. Mill argued that humans are justified in claiming only those certainties that remain after inviting the whole world to prove them wrong. Mill's description of moral dogmatists is still apt today:

> Respecting the rules of conduct which mankind impose upon one another,....People are accustomed to believe...that their feelings on this subject are better than

> reasons and render reasons unnecessary.[28]

A third source of incivility in our current society, it seems to me, is a fear of toleration. Consider a quotation from U.S. Senator Dan Coats of Indiana in a speech entitled "The Virtue of Tolerance." (The quote does not represent the whole of his view but illustrates part of my point.)

> For many professors, tolerance requires us to abandon belief in moral truth--in good or evil, in right and wrong. Such beliefs, they argue, are the cause of intolerance, because they cause us to judge. Every lifestyle is equal. No one has a right to criticize. The choice, baldly put, between Mother Teresa and Madonna is a simple matter of preference. The important thing is an open mind because an open mind cannot hate.[29]

There is a fear that toleration leads to, indeed requires, the acceptance of ethical subjectivism -- the view that one moral belief is just as good as another. As such, toleration is a corrupter of the youth. More particularly, there is a fear that toleration of particular beliefs or lifestyles (e.g., homosexuality) amounts to moral approval of them, either at the individual or social level. Finally, there is a fear that toleration as a social practice leads to the public acceptance of all fundamental differences about the good life and thus undermine the basis of a common life. All of these worries about toleration unleash (and in the minds of some) justify incivility in public discourse.

Although I cannot explore this issue in detail, I think the fear is misplaced and based on misunderstanding of tolerance and ethical subjectivism. Very briefly, if we mean by toleration the view that we ought to treat with respect the fundamental moral views of others, even if we think them mistaken, then toleration is itself a universal moral claim and incompatible with subjectivism and relativism. Tolerance does not mean one **accepts** all differences in moral positions; rather, it affirms that we should deal

with such differences through persuasion, not coercion, and where persuasion fails, we simply live peaceably with those with whom we disagree.

Incivility in public discourse has several effects. It corrodes mutual respect of persons. As Thompson and Gutmann observe, when we fail to maintain mutual respect, we lose the possibility of settling disputes on a *moral* basis. But that leaves only nonmoral ways of resolving conflict; shouting, self-interested bargaining, political power plays or threats of force and violence. Gutmann and Thompson argue that mutual respect goes beyond tolerance to include constructive interaction and reciprocity:

> Like tolerance, mutual respect is a form of agreeing to disagree. But mutual respect demands more than toleration. It requires a favorable attitude toward, and constructive interaction with, persons with whom one disagrees...that permits democracy to flourish in the face

> of (at least temporarily)
> unresolvable moral conflict.[30]

Rude and derogatory speech or behavior has a downward spiraling effect. Once we have breached our standards of courtesy and respect, it becomes easier for us to repeat the behavior. As Jean Bethke Elshtain notes, this cycle can destroy the neighborliness and mutuality that underlie civility:

> The long history of the human
> race suggests that resentment
> breeds resentment; hatred fuels
> hatred; ...and fear generates flight
> from neighborliness,
> largeheartedness, and the
> patience necessary to [endure].[31]

When we demonize those who disagree with us, we dehumanize them. We increase our sense of distance from them. We overwhelm the natural capacity for sympathy that connects us to our fellow citizens. Psychoanalyst Howard Halpern makes the point:

> Social psychologists and demagogues have long known that if ordinary citizens are to be provoked to violent actions against individuals or groups of fellow citizens, it is necessary to sever the empathetic bonds with those to be attacked, by painting them as different and despicable..[32]

Public incivility corrodes mutual respect and with it the both the self-control and well-wishing we saw in the example of the Kansas wheat farmers. For all these considerations, it seems to me that we ought to demand of ourselves and our leaders, higher standards of civility in our public life.

Reinvigorating Civic Associations

A third response to incivility in our times involves reinvigorating civic associations. In a 1991 essay entitled "The Idea of Civil Society," political philosopher Michael Walzer links decline in civility to the neglect of our civic associations:

> Increasingly, associational life in advanced ...democratic states seems at risk....Our cities really are noisier and nastier than they once were. Familial solidarity, mutual assistance, political like-mindedness -- all these are less certain than they once were... strangers on the street seem less trustworthy than they once did. The Hobbesian account of society is more persuasive than it once was....[33]

Walzer argues that we can promote civility by reinvigorating our voluntary civic associations and networks, including all the churches, unions, cooperatives, societies, school PTAs, political movements and neighborhood associations:

> The civility that makes democratic politics possible can only be learned in the associational networks.[34]

In fact, voluntary social connections have been a distinguishing feature of American life virtually since the nation was settled and founded. Alexis de Tocqueville noted in the 1830s that the American character seems to lead us to form civic associations:

> Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations...of a thousand...kinds, religious, moral....The Americans make associations...to found seminaries,... construct churches, diffuse books, to send missionaries... found hospitals, prisons and schools. If it is proposed to inculcate some truth or to foster some feeling by the encouragement of a great example, they form a society....I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object for the exertions of a great many men

> and inducing them voluntarily to pursue it.[35]

John Stuart Mill extolled the benefits of working together in voluntary activity for the public good. Mill argued that such activity enlarges our vision of our own interests; increases our capacity to empathize with the interests of others and helps us to identify with others as members of the same society, thereby encouraging us to take responsibility for the larger community:

> Give him something to do for the public...and his ideas and feelings are taken out of [their] narrow circle. ...He is made to feel that besides the interest which separates him from his fellow citizens, he has interests which connect him with them....[36]

Mill claims that this development of fellow-feeling can be readily contrasted with the asocial outlook of those who do not engage in voluntary activities. For such people:

> Every thought or feeling...either of interest or duty is absorbed in the individual and the family. The man never thinks of any collective interest, of any objects to be pursued jointly with others, but only in competition with them, and in some measure at their expense. A neighbor, not being an ally or an associate, since he is not engaged in any common undertaking for joint benefit, is therefore only a rival.[37]

For Mill, society reaps the benefits when citizens have cultivated themselves in an environment of cooperative activity. Civic associations therefore help to create a disposition of goodwill -- like the attitude expressed by the farmer who waves to a stranger. At a minimum, civic participation reduces the individual's inclination to harm others.[38]

In a 1995 essay entitled "*Bowling Alone, America's Declining Social Capital,*" Harvard scholar Robert D. Putnam argues that we now

have considerable empirical support from researchers for the value of voluntary social and civic groups.[39] Putnam reports that members of associations are much more likely than nonmembers to be active in politics, to spend time with neighbors and to express social trust. A survey of 35 countries found that a higher density of membership in associations is correlated with a higher level of trust among a society's citizens.[40]

Putnam takes his article title from the fact that bowling is up but the number of bowling teams and team activity is in decline. He takes those trends as symbolic for his findings that U.S. civic associations have experienced a decline both in membership and in activity. For example, compared to twenty years ago, Putnam says some 30 percent fewer Americans report they have attended a meeting on school matters or public affairs in the last year. In recent years, membership has declined in churches, unions, Parent Teacher Associations, League of Women Voters and other such voluntary associations.[41]

> The proportion of Americans who socialize with their

> neighbors more than once a year has slowly but steadily declined over the last two decades from 72 percent in 1974 to 61 percent in 1993....Americans are also less trusting. The proportion of Americans saying that most people can be trusted fell by more than a third between 1960 and 1993 from 58 percent to 37 percent.[42]
>
> It seems reasonable to expect that renewed associational activity could strengthen our social bonds, improve our identification with others and increase the civility of social life in our ever more pluralistic society.

As the friendly farmer in our opening story knows, civility is essential not only for civilization in the large sense, but also for community in the more intimate sense. Civility both nourishes community and is nourished by communal interaction. And as the writer of

Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Bible knows, community is essential to us all:

> Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.[43]

1 Portions of this paper are drawn, with permission, from "Civility and Community," my manuscript for the audio cassette of the same title in the series *Morality in Our Age,* produced by Knowledge Products, Nashville, Tennessee, 1995.

2 As reported in the Detroit News, August 23, 1995, p.1A

3 E. Mossman, tr. And ed., The Correspondence of Boris Pasternak and Olga Friedemberg, 1920-1945 (New York: Horcourt, 1982), pp. 303-304.

4 Aristotle, *Politics.* trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 1295b 23-25.

5 A huge social science literature documents these capacities. See, for example, C.D. Batson, "How Social an Animal?" *American Psychologist,* 45 (1990); June Piliavian and Hong-Wen Charng, "Altruism: A Review of Recent Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Sociology, 16 (1990).*

6 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics. trans W.D. Ross in Richard Mckeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle. (New York: Random House, 1941) NE 1103a15-1103b25.*

7 James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 92.

8 See, for example, Donald J. West and David P.

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